



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

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CHAPTER I.

THE BOY, THE MULE, AND THE REDCOATS.

"Hello, hat, where are you going with that boy?"

It was early in the month of September of the year 1776.

At the north side of what is now City Hall Park, New York, but what was then called The Common, at the point where the Bowery Lane—now the famous Bowery—began, a British soldier was stationed. He was a sentinel, and it was his duty to stop every one who came along, if coming from the north, and inquire who they were and what their business was—for on Harlem Heights, on the north end of Manhattan Island, was stationed the patriot army, and there was a probability that spies might come down at any time, bent on discovering the plans and intended movements of the British army.

On this afternoon in question the sentinel's attention had been attracted by a peculiar, not to say amusing sight. It was no other than a youth of seemingly anywhere from sixteen to eighteen years, mounted on an old, white mule, and with a market basket hanging on his arm.

The boy was roughly dressed in homespun blue, and wore an old, holey pair of shoes, and an old straw hat, with a wide brim. The hat was run up to a sharp point, in the fashion that is meant when straw hats are spoken of as having gone to seed.

It was this hat that had attracted the sentinel's attention, and had brought forth the remark from him, ironical and satirical to the last degree, of:

"Hello, hat, where are you going with that boy?"

The boy, who was now almost abreast the sentinel, reined up the old white mule, and said, in a high-pitched, nasal voice:

"Wuz ye torkin' ter me, mister?"

"No, I was talking to that hat of yours," was the reply, with a laugh.

"Oh, that wuz et, hey?"

"Yes. Say, young fellow, where did you get the hat, anyway?"

"Aunt Samanthy made et fur me."

"Oh, your Aunt Samanthy made it for you, did she?"

"Yep."

"Well, it's a beauty, I must say."

"Yep. I think et's purty nice."

"I should think you would think so," ironically.

"Yep, I do."

"What's your name?"

"Jim."

"Jim what?"

"No, not Jim What. Et's Jim Simpkins."

"Jim Simpkins, eh?"

"Yep."

"Humph. Where are you going, Jim?"

"Down inter ther city, yender."

"What for?"

"What for?"

"Yes."

"Ter do sum tradin'."

"Some trading, eh?"

"Yep."

"What have you in your basket?"

"Aiggs."

"Eggs, eh?"

"Yep."

"And you're going to market the eggs, I suppose, and buy some things with the money that you get?"

"Yep."

"You are sure you are not a spy?" the sentinel asked.

The youth looked at the sentinel in surprise.

"Er—spy?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"Yes."

He shook his head and looked puzzled.

"Whut's er spy?" he asked.

The redcoat laughed.

"Don't you know what a spy is?" he asked.

"I don' berleeve I do," was the reply.

"Well, a spy is one who goes among the soldiers who are enemies, and finds out all he can about them, what they are going to do, and everything of that kind."

The youth shook his head.

"Then I hain't no spy," he said.

"Are you for the king, or against him, Jim?"

"Whut king?" the youth asked.

"Why, King George, of course."

"Who's he?"

The sentinel stared at the youth.

"Haven't you ever heard of King George?" he asked.

"Noap."

"Well, there's ignorance for you. I suppose you know that we are having a war?"

The youth scratched his head, and appeared to reflect.

"I think I hev heerd Aunt Samanthy say sumthin' erbout er war," he said presently.

"Your Aunt Samanthy must be a smart woman if she knows we are having a war," sarcastically.

"Oh, she's awful smart, she is, mister."

"I should judge she is—at least if she is anything like her nephew."

"Yep; thet's right."

"You are not a rebel, are you, Jim?" the sentinel asked.

"Whut's er rebel?"

An exclamation of vexation and disgust escaped the lips of the redcoat.

"Say, I believe you are the greenest specimen of humanity I have laid eyes on since coming to America, and I've seen a few rank ones, I must say," he cried.

"Is thet so?" said Jim, calmly.

"Yes, it is."

"Wal, ef I'm green ye're red—hain't thet so, mister? He, he, he!"

"Shut up your head, and stop laughing, you fool!" roared the sentinel. "Don't you dare laugh at a British soldier. Why, I have half a mind to cut your head off."

"Oh, say, ye wouldn't do thet, would ye?" exclaimed the youth, opening his eyes wide, but not seeming to be very much frightened.

"I would as lief do it as to look at you."

"Ye don' say?"

"Yes, I do say."

"An' I s'pose ye'd ez soon look at me ez cut my head off, wouldn't ye?" the youth asked innocently.

"Yes, of course."

"Wal, then, jes' keep on lookin' at me, an' don' think nuthin' erbout cuttin' my head orf."

"Say, you think you are smart, don't you?" cried the redcoat.

"Noap; I hain't thinkin' nothen erbout et, mister."

"Oh, you aren't eh?"

"Noap."

Just then another redcoat approached, and he called out.

"What have you got there, Sam?"

"If you will give it a name you may have it, George," was the reply, with a laugh.

"Hello, sonny," said the newcomer, addressing the youth.

"Hello, yerse'f," was the reply.

"Where did you dig up that beautiful Arabian steed you are mounted on?"

"Ther—whut?" asked the boy, his mouth opening in wonder.

"You'll have to aim lower, comrade; you're shooting clear over his head," laughed the sentinel. "He doesn't understand you. Why, he didn't even know who King George is!"

"You don't mean it?" in surprise.

"Yes, I do; and he didn't know we were having a war."

"Oh, you're just trying to have a joke at my expense," the other cried.

"No, it's the truth."

The newcomer eyed the youth with interest.

"What kind of an animal do you call this that you are mounted on?" he asked presently.

"Et's er muel," replied Jim.

"A mule, eh?"

"Yas."

"Humph. He's a fine beast, isn't he?"

"Wal, he hain't so much ter look at, but he kin pull a good load. He's allers be'n more'n worth his feed."

"That is good. I would suppose as much, for no one would keep him on account of his good looks."

"No, I s'pose not."

"What have you in your basket?"

"Aiggs."

"Eggs, eh?"

"Yas."

"I should think you would be afraid to carry eggs on the back of a mule."

"W'y so?"

"What if he would get to kicking up? He would be likely to break all the eggs, wouldn't he?"

"Wal, yas, I guess thet'd be ther way uv et."

"Does your mule ever kick up?"

"Sumtimes, mister; but not orften."

"Not often, eh?"

"Well, a spy is one who goes among the soldiers who are enemies, and finds out all he can about them, what they are going to do, and everything of that kind."

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"Does your mule ever kick up?"

"Sumtimes, mister; but not orften."

"Not often, eh?"

"Noap."

The redcoat gave his comrade the wink, and in passing the mule, managed to tickle the animal in the flank with the point of his bayonet.

The mule gave utterance to a snort of rage and pain commingled—for the bayonet had penetrated the hide and flesh—and kicked out so suddenly as to catch the other sentinel napping, and its hoofs striking the redcoat in the chest, down he went, kerthump!

It happened that the sentinel had been just far enough away so as to escape the full force of the kick, and he was not materially injured. He was frightened and angered, however, and he scrambled to his feet, giving utterance to curses leveled against the mule, the rider, his comrade, and various other things.

"Heer! Heer! Ye'll make me break my aiggs, dreckly," cried Jim, in a tone of alarm. "Stan' still, dad-bing yer ugly picter!" this last to the mule.

The redcoat who had caused the trouble stood with his mouth spread, laughing, but of a sudden his laughter was changed to something different, for the mule suddenly kicked out, and its hoofs striking the fellow, sent him rolling down into a ditch at the roadside.

Yells, curses, and groans escaped his lips, as he slowly picked himself up, and regained a standing position.

The other redcoat now laughed in his turn, and he made the most of his opportunity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "Served you right! Jove, I'm glad the beast treated you to a sample of the kicks it has on tap! How do you like it, anyway?"

"Oh, the brute has broken half a dozen ribs for me, I think."

"Oh, I guess it isn't so bad as that," was the unsympathetic reply.

"Yes, it is; and if I had my musket I'd run the bayonet clear through the beast."

His musket had dropped out of his hands when the mule kicked him, and was lying in the road in altogether too close proximity to the mule's heels to permit of its owner trying to recover it.

"I'll lend you mine," with a grin. "Here it is. Come and get it, and run the bayonet through the mule, if you like. I don't believe I want the job myself."

"Hol' on!" cried the boy. "Don' do et, mister. Don' hurt my muel."

"I'll show you whether I won't hurt the beast or not," cried the redcoat, limping around to where his comrade stood, and reaching out his hand to take the musket. Before he could get hold of it, however, the mule came back-

ing toward the two, kicking out fiercely and rapidly with both feet, and dropping the musket, they took to their heels and ran for their lives.

"Now, away with you, Ebenezer," said the boy in an altered voice, and suddenly the mule stopped backing and kicking, and went trotting sedately across the Common, in the direction of Broadway.

The two redcoats, glancing back over their shoulders, and seeing that the danger was over, paused, and slowly returned to where their muskets lay. They picked up the weapons, looked after the boy and mule, and then turned disgusted-looking countenances toward each other.

"Blast mules, anyhow," said one.

"That's what I say," from the other.

"You never know what they are going to do."

"That's right, though it's always safe to assume that they will kick."

"You are right; and I don't think I'll try any tricks with mules in future."

"I wouldn't if I were you. But, say, do you suppose the boy had anything to do with causing the beast to kick us over?"

"I hardly think so," musingly. "If I thought that I would follow and kill both him and the mule."

If they could have seen the broad grin that rested on the youth's face at that very moment they would have felt sure that he had had something to do with making the mule kick them.

CHAPTER II.

EBENEZER AT WORK.

The youth rode on down Broadway, and presently stopped in front of a grocery store, and dismounting, tied the mule. Entering the store, he walked up to a man behind the counter and said:

"Say, mister, d'ye wanter buy sum aiggs?"

"Eggs, you say?"

"Yas."

"Why, certainly, I want to buy eggs, whenever I can get them at a reasonable price."

"Whut air they worth this afternoon?"

The storekeeper mentioned a price.

"All right; ye kin hev 'em."

As the price mentioned by the man was considerably less than the market value of the eggs, he hastened to count the eggs out of the basket.

"Why, some of the eggs are broken," he said when he had got nearly to the bottom of the basket.

"I speck they air, mister. My muel got ter kickin' an' prancin' aroun' er leetle while ergo, and chounced ther eggs up an' down. Ther wunder is thet more uv 'em hain't bruck."

The storekeeper counted the eggs, and then counted out the money that was due the boy, who pocketed it with an air of satisfaction.

"Kin I leeve ther basket heer erwhile, mister?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"All right; much obleeged."

The boy turned and walked out of the store, and found a redcoat looking the mule over with a critical eye.

"This your mule, sonny?" the redcoat asked.

"Yep," replied Jim.

"May I borrow him for an hour or two?"

"I need 'im myself, mister."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yep."

"Well, that doesn't matter. I'm a soldier of the king, and as I have important business calling me up country a ways, and have no horse, I am going to make use of the mule."

"Uv my muel?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"But I tell ye I need 'im myself."

"I can't help that. I need him, too, and I'm going to have him!"

He began untying the halter-strap.

"Say, ye better leeve my muel be!" said Jim, threateningly.

The redcoat only laughed.

"I couldn't think of it for a moment, my boy."

"Ye'd better."

"Bah!" turning angrily upon the boy. "What'll you do?"

"I won' do nothen," was the calm reply. "But Ebeneezer, he'll do sumthin'."

"Ebeneezer is the name of the mule, I suppose?"

"Yep."

"Well, what'll he do?"

"He won't let no stranger ride 'im."

"He won't, hey?"

"Noap."

"He'll have to let me ride him," with a laugh. "I guess you are just saying that to discourage me, and get me to let him alone."

"No, I hain't; et's-er fack."

"I'll risk it."

"Ye hedn't better."

"Bah! I'm too old a hand to be frightened so easilee my boy."

"All right; go erhead, ef ye want. But ye mustn't blame me fur whut happens."

"Oh, I won't."

The redcoat had untied the halter-strap by this time and leading the mule out from the hitching-rack a little ways, placed his foot in the stirrup and mounted.

The mule stood perfectly still.

Its head was hanging down, and its eyes were half-closed; it looked almost too sleepy and tired to move.

"Hold up your head, Ebeneezer," cried the redcoat jerking on the reins. "Say, boy. I thought you said thim mule was dangerous for a stranger to try to ride."

"So he is, mister."

"Bosh! I believe that in order to get him to move we will be necessary to build a fire under him."

"I don't think so," said the boy. "He'll go, dreckly, and too fast ter suit ye, I'll bet."

The redcoat told the mule to "gid-dap," but the ungainly beast stood perfectly still. He didn't "gid-dap" worth a cent.

Then the redcoat clucked at the mule, but this had no effect, either.

"Gid-dap!" roared the soldier, and at the same time he slapped the animal on the neck.

Still Ebeneezer stood perfectly still. His eyes were half-closed, and he seemed to be thinking of something else besides traveling.

A crowd had gathered, attracted by the spectacle of a British soldier mounted on an ungainly white mule; then, too, they had heard most of the conversation between the redcoat and the mule's owner, and were in hopes that the boy would try to force the soldier to get off the mule. This would cause trouble, and anything of that kind would be welcomed by the crowd, always eager to see a show for nothing.

The members of the crowd, fearing they were to be cheated out of their fun, decided to help the redcoat, by the tender of advice.

"Kick the mule in the ribs!" cried one.

"Bite his ear!"

"Speak to him politely!"

"Yes, that's it. Say to him, 'Please, Mr. Mule! Please Mr. good mule, won't you please go on?'"

"Twist his tail."

This last suggestion was given by one who was wise regarding the characteristics of mules in general, and was

spoken sarcastically, but among the crowd were a number of redcoats whose knowledge of mules was very limited. They thought the man's suggestion was made in good faith, and the idea of twisting the animal's tail in order to make him to struck them as being a good one.

"That's the thing to do," cried one. "I'll twist the mule's tail," and he stepped forward, followed by three or four of his comrades.

Instantly the crowd fell back, and gave the redcoats plenty of room, while the members exchanged glances and grinned in anticipation of the coming circus.

"That's right; you are the boy for that work," cried a spectator. "Go ahead and twist the critter's tail, and I'll wager that he'll go."

"You bet he'll go," from another; "and so will you fellows!" he added in a low tone, for the benefit of those who were standing near, and they snickered softly.

The leading redcoat, having got within reaching distance of the mule, seized hold of the animal's tail, and began twisting it in a most vigorous fashion.

The crowd literally held its breath and watched and waited eagerly. It knew something would happen, and quickly, and did not wish to lose any portion of the show.

Suddenly Ebenezer's eyes came open, which was an indication that he realized that something unusual was going on.

He turned his head slowly, and looked back at the man who was doing the tail-twisting act.

He looked at the man for perhaps ten seconds, and then all of a sudden he gave utterance to a hoarse squeal of anger, and began kicking out with both hind legs, fiercely, rapidly, viciously.

The life of the one who had been twisting the mule's tail was saved in a peculiar manner. The fellow was so close to the mule that he did not get all the force of the kick; indeed, it was more in the nature of a shove, but it was sufficient to upset him and three of his comrades who happened to be right behind him. The others hastened to get out of the way, running wildly into the midst of the crowd in order to reach a safe place. The four who had been upset were busy, also. They were whirling over and over, and by rolling down into the gutter managed to keep from being trodden into the ground by the mule's hoofs.

The redcoat who was mounted on the animal's back was doing all he could do to retain his seat, and was yelling "Whoa! Whoa!" at the top of his voice, and jerking on the reins; but as Ebenezer was already going backward instead of forward this kept him going, rather than aided in

bringing him to a stop. The redcoat had lost his hat, and his hair was almost literally standing on end, so great was its owner's terror.

The crowd was shrieking with delight.

It had never seen a better circus.

The affair was furnishing much more sport than they had anticipated, and they were quite willing to help the good cause along by giving all sorts of advice to the principals.

"Don't let the mule throw you."

"Hang on, mister!"

"Catch hold of the mule's mane!"

As the mule had no mane to speak of, this advice was scarcely worthy of consideration, but it was probably given in a spirit of sarcasm. This may be taken for an absolute fact, as the speaker was the same man who had suggested twisting the mule's tail to make it go.

"Kick the mule's head off!"

"Catch the beast by the ears and jerk him over backward!"

"Shoot the beast!"

This last advice was given by a redcoat, who doubtless sympathized with his comrades, but the suggestion met with the disapproval of the crowd.

"No, no; don't shoot the mule," was the cry. "He's all right. He's only doing what he thinks is right."

As for the real owner of the mule, the boy who called himself Jim Simpkins, he was watching the affair with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"Serves them right," he said to himself. "I guess Ebenezer is a match for as many redcoats as can get around him."

"Whoa! whoa! whoa, Eben—eezer!" roared the redcoat in the saddle. The break in the utterance of the mule's name was caused by the animal leaping in the air and coming down stiff-legged, thus jolting the rider and forcing him to speak on the installment plan.

Suddenly a peculiar, tremulous whistle was heard. Where it came from no one knew, though it emanated from somewhere in the crowd.

The truth was it was given utterance to by Jim Simpkins, and the instant it was heard the mule suddenly began bucking. It humped up its back, and bucked rapidly and fiercely, while the rider gave utterance to wild yells for the animal to "Whoa!" and to "Stand still," all to no avail, while the crowd fairly howled with delight.

"Hang on!"

"Stick to it!"

"I'll bet on the mule."

"How do you like it up there?"

"I'll bet he's seasick."

"Hurrah for King George!"

"Yes, and hurrah for Ebenezer!"

Such were a few of the cries and exclamations given utterance to by the members of the crowd, and it was evident that the sympathy was fully as much with the mule as with the redcoat.

The truth was that there were many patriot citizens in the crowd, men who had been forced to be very careful what they said and did after the capture of New York city by the British, and their anger had many times been aroused by the insolence and arrogance of the British soldiers. Naturally, then, they were glad to see this fellow get the shaking up.

The mule was a good buckner; he was wholly at home when it came to that sort of work, and it did not take him long to emerge from the fray a victor, a final and more fierce buck than any that had come before having sent the redcoat flying through the air as if shot from a catapult.

He described the segment of a circle, his arms and legs wildly flying, while a yell of terror trailed from his lips like a vocal kite-tail; he looked like a huge trounced frog, and when he struck the ground it was with a thud that could have been heard half a block away, while a gurgling groan went up from his lips.

The breath was knocked out of the redcoat's body, and he lay where he had fallen, gasping for breath, and having just strength enough to permit of his rolling from side to side. The mule, having rid itself of the undesired burden, stood calmly where it had alighted the last time it came down, and gazed at its victim with a benignant look in its eyes.

"Hurrah, the mule won!"

"You bet he did."

"Ebenezer is all right."

"He's the champion buckner."

"It would take a better rider than that fellow to stay on his back."

"The soldier isn't dead, is he?"

Such were a few of the exclamations, and then a couple of the redcoats went to their comrade's assistance. They lifted him to a sitting posture, and when he had caught his breath they helped him to his feet, and steadied him, for he swayed unsteadily, and would undoubtedly have fallen but for the assistance they rendered him.

Presently the redcoat was able to stand alone, and as soon as he could do so he drew a pistol.

"I'm going to kill that beast, if it's the last thing I do

in this world," he cried, leveling the weapon and taking aim.

But before he could fire Jim Simpkins leaped forward and knocked the pistol out of the redcoat's hand.

"You sha'n't shoot Ebenezer!" he cried defiantly. "Ye hev ter shoot me furst ef ye do!"

CHAPTER III.

DARING WORK.

A cheer went up from the crowd.

"Thet's right; ye hain't got no call to shoot the mule."

"You were to blame yourself."

"You ought not to have got on the animal's back."

"That's right. At any rate, he ought not to think of shooting the animal."

The redcoat whirled upon the boy with a snarl of rage.

"What do you mean by knocking my pistol out of my hand?" he cried angrily.

"I mean thet ye sha'n't shoot Ebenezer," was the reply.

"But I will shoot the beast."

"No, ye won't."

"I'll show you! Get out of my way."

But the youth did not budge. He stood his ground, and looked the redcoat straight in the eyes.

"Get out of the way, I tell you," again cried the redcoat, and as he spoke he drew another pistol.

"Shame! shame!" cried a number of the spectators.

Then hisses were heard on every side, but they only served to make the redcoat more angry.

"If you don't get out of the way, boy," he cried, "I'll shoot you, and then finish the mule afterward."

"I hev giv ye fair warnin'," was the youth's reply. "Ef ye try ter hurt thet mule ye'll git hurt yerself."

The redcoat laughed in derision.

"Who'll hurt me?" he asked.

"I will." The boy spoke in an ordinary tone of voice, save that it sounded very grim and decided.

"Bosh! stand aside, you fool." As he spoke the soldier caught hold of the youth, and attempted to push him to one side, but found to his surprise that he could not do so. The youth stood there as if rooted to the spot.

Angered by his failure to push the youth aside, the redcoat struck at Jim's face with his open hand, evidently intending to cuff his ear so hard as to knock him out of the way, but the youth ducked and the man's hand went over

s head. The force of the blow was sufficient to cause the redcoat to swing half around and almost lose his balance, and the youth quickly reached out and jerked the pistol out of its owner's hand and threw it some distance away.

The instant the redcoat got straightened up he attacked the youth with great fury. He struck at the boy with both fists, rapidly and fiercely, and had the blows taken effect, could quickly have knocked Jim senseless.

Strange to say, however, the blows did not take effect. The youth betrayed wonderful agility, not to say science in the matter of dodging, ducking, evading, and parrying, and although the soldier struck a hundred blows within the space of a few minutes, not one landed in a way to do any damage. Of course a few struck slantingly, but the force was not there. The majority of the blows were evaded altogether, and the matter of striking empty atmosphere was so tiring that the soldier was soon panting, and his arms were so tired he was forced to drop them to let them rest. They seemed to him to weigh a ton apiece.

The crowd had watched the affair with breathless interest. They had wondered at the wonderful display by the seeming country boy, and scarcely knew what to think.

They were destined to be even more surprised, however, for suddenly Jim Simpkins took his turn.

The instant the redcoat ceased striking out, and dropped his arms, the youth began the attack, and he struck the redcoat when and where he pleased.

He forced the soldier backward with ease, and a close observer would no doubt have suspected the youth was not striking as hard as he could have struck.

This was proved to be the case a few moments later, when Jim struck two blows with considerably more force than any he had so far delivered. One blow was in the chest, the other on the jaw, and down went the soldier with a thump! What was more, he lay there—dazed.

A murmur of amazement and wonder went up from the crowd, and many were the exclamations indulged in.

"Don't that beat anything?"

"It certainly does."

"Say, the boy is all right, isn't he?"

"He is, that."

"He is too much for the redcoat."

"Get up there, and try it over again."

But the redcoat was too dazed to obey this last suggestion.

Doubtless he would have liked to have obeyed, but he could not.

The youth stood, looking down upon his fallen foe, when

four comrades of the redcoat stepped out and confronted the youth.

"Who are you?" asked one, imperiously.

"Who'm I?" remarked the youth, facing his enemies fearlessly.

"Yes."

"I'm Jim Simpkins."

"Bosh! You are not anything of the kind."

The youth looked surprised.

"Ye say I hain't?" he exclaimed.

"No, you are not."

"Then ef I hain't Jim Simpkins, who am I?"

"You are a rebel spy."

A look of wonder appeared on the youth's face.

"Me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you."

"Oh, no, I hain't."

"Yes, you are, and we are going to arrest you."

"Goin' ter 'rest me?"

"Yes."

"But I don' wanter be 'rested."

"It doesn't matter what you want. You will have to go with us."

"Oh, say, that's a shame."

"The boy is no rebel spy."

"It's the height of foolishness to think of such a thing."

"Of course it is!"

"You had better let the boy alone."

"He is not to blame for what has happened."

Such were a few of the remarks made by the members of the crowd, and some of the men crowded forward, as if to render the youth assistance, and prevent the redcoats from arresting him, but the soldiers drew pistols and waved the crowd back.

"Stand back, or we'll fire," one cried. "We are going to take this young fellow to headquarters, and then, if he is not guilty, as charged, he will be liberated. We are confident he is a spy, however, for he is certainly not what he pretends to be. Where is there the green country youth who can fight as he fights? Where is there the country youth who could knock one of the king's soldiers senseless? He's a rebel spy, and he must go with us."

Seven or eight more redcoats had stepped forward, and had closed in around the youth, so if he had any thoughts of making his escape he was forced to dismiss them.

"Seize the rebel spy, men," ordered the redcoat who had taken it upon himself to be master of ceremonies; and then to Jim he added:

"If you attempt to resist it will be the worse for you."

But Jim did not resist. He saw it would be useless, and wisely submitted to being made a prisoner. By the time his arms had been bound together behind his back the redcoat who had been stretched out on the ground, dazed, had recovered sufficiently to stand alone, he having been assisted to rise by his comrades.

The crowd was muttering, but it did not dare make any move toward aiding the youth, for the redcoats kept their pistols in their hands, and would not have hesitated to use them.

"Bring the rebel spy along," ordered the leader of the party of redcoats, and he strode down the street, pistol in hand, the others following, with Jim in their midst.

"Say, won't sumbuddy pleeze put my muel in er stable, sumwhurs till I come back?" called out Jim, and one of the men in the crowd replied:

"Yes, I'll take care of Ebenezer for you, my boy."

The party and the prisoner marched down Broadway, attracting considerable attention as they went, and at last came to a stop in front of a tavern.

"One of you men help me. The others can disperse, if they like," said the leader, and he took hold of Jim's arm, and with another man on the other side, the youth was marched into the building.

To an orderly who appeared the leader said:

"Tell General Howe that we have a prisoner out here and that we think he is a rebel spy."

The orderly bowed and withdrew. He was back again in a few moments, and said:

"The general says bring the prisoner in. Follow me."

They followed him into a hall and up a flight of stairs. He ushered them into a goodly-sized room fronting on the street, and at a desk at the farther side sat the commander-in-chief of the British army, General Howe.

The general faced around and gazed keenly at the prisoner, as the three came to a stop in front of him.

The youth looked frightened. Whether the look was assumed for the occasion is hard to say. One thing is sure, he had not shown fear when he was facing the redcoats up on Broadway.

"Well," said the general, presently, "who are you?"

"I'm Jim Simpkins, mister," was the reply, a faint tremor appearing in the youth's tones.

"Jim Simpkins, eh?"

"Yas, mister."

"Where do you live?"

"Up ther Bowery Lane, mister."

"Why are you down here in the city?"

"I cum down ter do sum marketin', mister."

"You did, eh?"

"Yas, mister."

"What did you bring to market?"

"Aiggs."

"Eggs, eh?"

"Yas."

"Did you sell the eggs?"

"Yas, mister?"

"Where is the money you got for them?"

"In my pocket."

The general turned his eyes on the two redcoats.

"What made you think this youth a rebel spy?" he asked.

"The way he fought, your excellency," replied the leader.

"The way he fought?" inquiringly.

"Yes," and then the soldier told about the encounter the street.

The general listened with an air of interest, and then again made a careful survey of the youth.

"How comes it that you were able to knock one of my soldiers senseless, young man?" he asked.

"I dunno, mister."

"You don't know, eh?"

"No, mister."

"Have you ever done any fighting before?"

"Er leetle."

"Who with?"

"Ther nabor boys."

"The neighbor boys, eh?"

"Yep—I mean yas, mister."

"How did you usually come out of the contests?"

"Out uv ther whut, mister?"

"The contests—fights."

"Oh, ther fights? Wal, I giner'ly cum out uv 'em a right, mister," with a grin.

"I should judge that such would be the case," dryly; "you were able to knock one of my men senseless, you ought to be able to hold your own with neighbor boys."

"I giner'ly do thet, mister."

"Remove the prisoner's hat," said the general, abruptly. One of the redcoats did so.

General Howe looked searchingly at the prisoner, and shook his head.

"Take him to that room, yonder, and make him wash his face," he said presently. "I can't tell what he really does look like, with all that dirt on his face."

"Come," said the redcoat who had been responsible for his being brought here, and the youth was led into the room in question.

There was a washbowl and pitcher of water on a stand at one side, and unbinding the prisoner's arms, the redcoat said:

"You heard what the general said; now get to work, and wash that dirty face of yours."

"All right, mister," said the youth, and he started toward the stand.

He took only a couple of steps, however, and then, whirling suddenly, he struck first one of the redcoats and then the other, two terrible blows full upon their jaws, felling them as if they had been struck by a heavy club wielded by a strong man.

"What was that? What's the matter?" called out General Howe, and the youth heard footsteps approaching the connecting door. Then the door opened, and the general appeared in the doorway.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried, aghast, starting back, and laying his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"It means that I am not going to remain a prisoner, General Howe," cried the youth, and leaping forward, he shoved the British officer with such force as to send him reeling across the room. Then, with a mocking, triumphant laugh, the youth darted out of the room into the hall.

"Catch me if you can," he called back, and then, closing the door, he ran along the hall to the rear end, and lifting a window, climbed out upon a shed-roof, closed the window, slid down the roof, dropped to the ground, and ran away from the building with the speed of the wind.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK FINDS A FRIEND.

"Stop him! Stop the scoundrel!" roared General Howe, and as soon as he could regain his equilibrium he ran to the door, opened it, and looked out in the hall.

He could see nothing of the youth, however, and at this moment the two redcoats who had been felled by the youth came rushing out of the other room.

"Where is he? Which way did he go?" they cried wildly.

"I don't know," was the reply. "How did he manage to escape from the two of you?"

"We unbound his hands to let him wash himself, as you told us to have him do, your excellency," said one, "and he dealt us two blows that knocked us down and almost sense-

less. At any rate, we were so dazed we could not move for a little while, and that gave him a chance to get away."

"Well, run down and sound the alarm! Catch the scoundrel, if you possibly can do so, for I am confident he is a rebel, and likely a spy."

"I am sure of it, your excellency," said one, and then the two hastened out of the room and down the stairs.

"Which way did he go?" they cried, eagerly, as they burst into the bar-room and office.

"Which way did who go?" asked the landlord.

"The rebel."

"What rebel?"

"The one we brought in here a few minutes ago. You saw him with us, didn't you?"

"Oh, that boy?"

"Yes; but he was more of a man than he looked to be."

"You say he was a rebel?"

"Yes, and he has escaped."

"Escaped!"

"Yes."

"How did he manage to escape from the two of you?"

"We untied his hands, to let him wash his face, and he hit us two terrible blows, and knocked us nearly senseless, and then he made his escape. Didn't he go through this room?"

"No."

"He didn't?"

The redcoats could hardly believe it.

"He did not. I haven't seen him since he disappeared through that doorway, yonder, in your company, a few minutes ago."

"Have you been in here all the time?"

"Yes."

"Then he must have gone out the rear way."

The landlord nodded.

"He would be likely to go that way," he said. "He would be foolish to try to get out this way."

The two redcoats waited to hear no more, but rushed out of the tavern and around to the rear.

They saw the window, the shed-roof, and nodded their heads.

"That is the way he left the tavern," said one, "and he is making his way out of this locality by way of the back alleys, you may be sure."

"You are right. Well, you go that way and I will go this. We may get sight of him."

"All right."

The two set out on the run, and ran for several blocks.

They kept a sharp lookout ahead, but failed to catch sight of the youth they were looking for.

At last they realized that they were on a wild goose chase, and paused and turned back.

They retraced their steps to the tavern, entered, and made their way upstairs to General Howe's room.

He was pacing back and forth across the room, a frown upon his face.

"Well?" he remarked, interrogatively, as the two entered.

The redcoats shook their heads.

"We could find no traces of him," said one.

"Couldn't, eh?"

"No, your excellency."

"I expected as much."

"He has disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up."

"Which proves that he is a shrewd and expert rebel spy, to my way of thinking."

"And mine, your excellency."

"The scoundrel!" suddenly exploded the general, his fat face growing red with anger; "to think that he should dare lay his hands on me, the commander-in-chief of the British army in America!"

"Did he strike you, sir?"

"No, but he shoved me—yes, sir, shoved me, and sent me reeling clear across this room!"

"That was just what might be expected of a daring and reckless rebel."

"Yes, but if I knew who he was I would never rest till I had captured him, and made him suffer for his impudence!"

"I have a suspicion regarding the identity of the young rebel, your excellency," said the redcoat who had been responsible for the capture of the youth in the first place.

The general ceased pacing back and forth, and looked at the speaker with an air of interest.

"You have?" he queried.

"Yes."

"Who do you think he was?"

"Your excellency has heard of a young fellow by the name of Dick Slater, have you——"

"Dick Slater!" The general almost roared the name out.

"Yes, your excellency; you have heard of him, have you——"

"Heard of him? Well, I should say I have. More, I have seen him, have met him on two or three occasions, and know him only too well."

"Then what do you think of my suspicion regarding that fellow we had here a little while ago being Dick Slater?"

The general was silent for a few moments, evidently turning the matter over in his mind. Presently he slapped his thigh emphatically and excitedly, and exclaimed:

"By all that's wonderful, I believe you are right in your suspicion, my man."

"You think the fellow could have been Dick Slater then?"

"I think he not only could have been, but really was."

"And that explains his wonderful fighting abilities, your excellency."

"So it does. Dick Slater is a terror when it comes to fighting, either with fists or weapons."

"So I have always heard, sir."

"Yes, indeed; I have seen considerable of his work, and must say that this affair of a few minutes ago looks like his handiwork."

"He was disguised, of course, sir; was made up to represent a green, gawky country youth."

"Yes; Dick Slater is good at that sort of work, and I am surprised that I did not suspect who he was at the very first."

"Well, he has made his escape this time, sure."

"Yes, but he is in the city yet, and I will capture him if such a thing is possible. I will send out word that close watch be kept for him, and when he tries to leave the city it is possible that he may be captured."

"That is a good idea, sir; and would it not be a good plan to keep watch of that mule of his?"

"Yes, indeed; though I think the youth is too smart to attempt to ride the mule out of the city, after what has happened."

"I fear so, myself."

General Howe at once sent out word that Dick Slater, the "Champion Spy of the Revolution," was in the city, and for every one to be on the lookout for him.

"Five hundred pounds reward for his capture," was the way he ended his talk regarding the young patriot spy. "Now go out and bring the young scoundrel in."

"We'll get him, if such a thing is possible," said several of his hearers, determindly.

But they well knew they would have a hard task in effecting the capture of Dick Slater.

As the reader has already suspected, the youth made up a country boy, and calling himself Jim Simpkins, was no other than Dick Slater, the daring scout, spy, and captain of "The Liberty Boys of '76."

He had been sent down into the city by General Wash-

to try to learn something regarding the intentions of the British, and as he was known to many of the redcoats and their officers, by sight, he had disguised himself. He had succeeded in getting into the city, but as we have seen, he got into trouble, and was made a prisoner and taken to headquarters.

After making his escape from the tavern in which General Howe had his quarters, Dick ran with all his might, keeping to the alleys in order to avoid being seen and chased.

When he had gone three or four blocks, however, he slackened his speed to a walk, and turned up one of the main streets leading toward Broadway.

As he walked along, he was pondering his best plan of procedure.

He realized that if he were to try to leave the city at once, the chances were that he would be apprehended and recaptured.

Then, too, he did not wish to leave the city, as yet.

He had come there on business, and very important business at that.

General Washington had sent him down there to find out the plans of the British, and he was not willing to go back without having done so.

He had but just arrived in the city; he was determined not to be frightened out before making an effort to learn something.

The youth thought of his mule, and asked himself if it would be safe to return to where the animal had been left, and claim it.

After some thought he decided that it would not be safe.

"No, I'll let Ebenezer take care of himself for awhile," he thought. "If I can recover him later on, well and good. If not, it will have to be the same. Ebenezer is a good mule, but I cannot afford to take chances of being recaptured for the sake of recovering him."

At this moment a man stepped out of a hallway and confronted Dick, and said:

"Hello, my boy!"

The youth started, and looked at the man keenly and searchingly.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A friend."

"How do I know that?"

"You cannot know it, but I do, and that is sufficient for the present, I think. By the way, how did you manage to escape from the hands of the redcoats?"

Dick stared.

"How did you know I was in the hands of any redcoats?" he asked.

The man laughed.

"I was in the crowd that saw the circus up on Broadway half an hour ago," he explained.

The youth smiled.

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes; I'm the man that took care of the mule, Ebenezer."

"Ah, I'm glad I ran across you. Where is Ebenezer?"

"In my stable."

"How far from here?"

"Not far."

"I'm glad of that. Still, I have made up my mind that I will not go where the mule is right away, as I fear there will be redcoats there watching for me, in the expectation that I will come."

"That is just what will happen, without doubt."

"Yes; so I guess I shall have to leave Ebenezer with you for awhile. I will pay you for taking care of him."

"I have been paid, my boy."

"You have been paid?" wonderingly.

"Yes; the way the mule kicked the redcoats around was sufficient payment for a month's board for the beast. I was never so tickled in my life."

The youth eyed the speaker searchingly.

"Then you don't like the redcoats?" he asked.

"You are right, my boy, I don't."

"Neither do I."

The man glanced up and down the street, to make sure that no one was within hearing distance, and then said:

"I have been sure of that from the first; and I will say that I have a shrewd suspicion, my boy, that you are not exactly what you pretend to be. Am I right?"

The youth hesitated slightly, and noticing this, the man went on:

"You need not be afraid to speak fully and freely. I am a patriot—as strong a one as lives to-day, and whatever you tell me will be held inviolate, and if there is anything I can do to assist you in any way, you may be sure that I will do it gladly."

"Then I will tell you the truth," said Dick. "I am a patriot, like yourself. I am a soldier, and have come down from the patriot army on Harlem Heights, to try to spy on the British and find out what they intend doing."

"I suspected that you were a patriot spy, my boy; and now, if you will do so, I would like for you to tell me your name."

"I have no objections, sir; my name is Slater—Dick Slater."

The man grasped Dick's hand and shook it warmly.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Dick Slater," he said earnestly. "I have heard of you frequently, and of your 'Liberty Boys,' as well, and now, if there is anything I can do to assist you, name it."

CHAPTER V.

AT THE ROGERS' HOME.

"I'll tell you what you can do that will be of great assistance to me," said Dick.

"What?"

"Take me to your home, and help me to rig up a new disguise."

"I'll do it, gladly. You will need to change your looks, sure enough."

"Yes, for the redcoats will soon all be on the lookout for me, and of course my description will be given."

"True; well, come along. It is not far to my home."

The youth accompanied the man, and a rapid walk of five minutes brought them to a small frame house standing well back on a lot not far from the Common.

The man opened the door and entered, and Dick followed.

They entered the sitting-room, and there the man introduced the youth to a woman and girl, speaking of them as "My wife, Mrs. Rogers, and my daughter, Alice."

"My own name," he explained, after the introduction, "is Hank Rogers."

The woman was perhaps forty years of age, and very good-looking, while the girl was not much more than sixteen, and was bright-looking and beautiful.

Mr. Rogers quickly explained the youth's presence, and then told Dick to follow him. He led the way upstairs, and into a room, where he left Dick, telling him to wait a few minutes.

A few minutes later Mr. Rogers returned, bringing a pitcher of water and a wash-basin. These he placed on a little table at one side, and, turning to Dick, said:

"Now go ahead and wash your face. After that we will see how these clothes will fit you," and he drew forth a suit of clothes from a closet.

Dick proceeded to wash his face and hands, and dry them, and then he combed his hair, after which he doffed the

rough suit of homespun, and donned the suit Mr. Rogers had brought out.

It fitted him very well, indeed, and Dick looked at the man inquiringly.

"Belongs to my boy, Sam," the man explained. "He went to sea two years ago, and has not returned."

"That is too bad!" said Dick, in a low, sympathetic voice. "But he may turn up all right, one of these days, Mr. Rogers."

"I hope so, Dick," in a voice which trembled slightly. "But I fear that such will not be the case."

"Perhaps the war has had something to do with his returning, sir; he may have been detained in England."

"It is possible that the ship he was on put into an English port, and it was discovered that Sam was an American and he was held there."

The clothes fitted Dick very well, indeed, as did a pair of shoes and a hat of rather old style, but in good condition.

When Dick had finished they went back downstairs, and it was evident that the woman and girl were considerably taken with the youth, who was handsome indeed in the clothing of more fashionable make. The woman knew whose clothing it was, however, and the knowledge brought a sad look to her face.

"What are you going to do, Dick?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"I will not do much of anything till nightfall," was the reply, "and then I will get out and try to learn something about the British and their plans."

"I don't think you had better venture out upon the street, Mr. Slater," said the girl, blushing slightly as she met Dick's look.

"Why not, Miss Alice?" he asked.

"Because there are several British soldiers near by."

"There are?" in surprise.

"Yes, and they seem to be watching our place. They look first at the house, and then toward the stable."

"I know what it means, Dick," exclaimed Mr. Rogers. "They know the mule was brought to this place, and they are watching to see if you will come here to get your animal."

"Likely you are right, Mr. Rogers."

"I am sure of it."

"Well, it is lucky for us they didn't get here sooner."

"So it is; but now the question is, how are you to leave this house?"

"He will not dare do so until after nightfall," said Mrs. Rogers.

"That is a good idea," said her husband. "You will have

Rog "I judge that will be the best and safest thing for me to do," the youth said. "I am the more willing to do it, the reason that I could not hope to do much of anything before nightfall, anyway."

at "True; and you can stay here quietly till evening, take supper with us, and then slip out when you get ready."

the This having been decided, Dick settled down to take things easy. He talked with Mr. and Mrs. Rogers and Alice, and passed the time away very pleasantly.

da An hour had passed, perhaps, when an exclamation escaped the lips of Alice.

"Two of the redcoats are coming to the house," she said in a low, frightened voice.

The others looked out of the window and saw that the girl was right.

"You had better go upstairs, Dick," said Mr. Rogers. "We will see what the redcoats want. I think it likely they simply wish to ask a few questions. I don't think there is any danger that they will wish to enter and search the house."

"I judge you are right. I will go upstairs at once."

As Dick left the room there came a knock on the front door.

Mr. Rogers went at once, and opened the door.

"Good-evening," said one of the redcoats.

"Good-evening," replied Mr. Rogers.

"You live here, sir?"

"I do."

"Are you the man who caught the white mule that country boy was riding, and led him away, after the boy was made a prisoner by some of my comrades?"

"Yes, I am the man."

"Where is the mule?"

"In the stable back yonder."

"Ah, yes; you intend keeping the mule till the boy calls for him?"

"That is my intention."

"You haven't seen anything of the boy since he was taken a prisoner?" The redcoat looked searchingly at the man as he asked the question.

"No," was the reply, while Mr. Rogers met the redcoat's look with seeming frankness.

"I thought that perhaps you might have seen him. He made his escape soon after being taken to headquarters."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Mr. Rogers, with well-assumed surprise in tones and air.

"Yes; and we thought the boy might have come here to get his mule."

"No, he hasn't done so; but there is a chance that he will do so."

"That's what I think. I suppose you were not aware that the boy was a rebel spy?"

The man shook his head.

"Certainly I was not," he replied. "Surely that is not the case, is it?"

"Yes; at any rate, that is what the commander-in-chief thinks."

"Can it be possible?"

"Yes; he thinks that the boy was a famous rebel spy, known as Dick Slater."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Mr. Rogers.

"Yes."

"Why, I've heard of Dick Slater."

"So has everybody; he's a most daring spy."

"So he is; and since you speak of it I would not be surprised if General Howe were right, for the boy fought like one who had had lots of experience."

"He did that. No country gawk could have knocked a British soldier senseless as he did up there on Broadway; and, too, down at headquarters he knocked two soldiers almost senseless, and made his escape without trouble."

"Well, well. He must be a dangerous fellow."

"So he is; he is considered so dangerous, in fact, that the commander-in-chief has offered five hundred pounds reward for his capture."

"Five hundred pounds!"

"Yes, and we want to win the money by capturing the spy."

"I don't blame you."

"I suppose you are a loyal king's man?" the redcoat asked.

"Oh, yes," was the reply, with apparent sincerity.

"Well, lend us all the assistance in your power, and if we succeed in capturing the rebel spy, I will see to it that you get a share of the reward."

"All right; that's a bargain," with simulated eagerness.

"What do you wish me to do?"

"I'll tell you. The chances are that the young fellow will come here sooner or later to get his mule; and if he does, you are to invite him into the house, and keep him engaged in conversation while we slip up and surround the house."

"I see."

"And when we have done that, three or four of us will suddenly enter and make him a prisoner."

"I understand."

"And you will do it?"

"Yes, yes; of course."

"Good; now we will withdraw to a safe distance, for if he were to come here, and see us hanging around close to the house, he would be suspicious, and might not try to get his mule."

"True; you may depend upon me to do my part of the work."

"Good; do it, and you will be rewarded."

"I will, never fear."

Then the soldiers withdrew, and Mr. Rogers closed the door and called to Dick to come down.

"They want me to help capture you," he said to the youth, with a smile, when the "Liberty Boy" appeared.

"I heard the conversation," with an answering smile.

"They were very liberal in offering me a share of the reward."

"Yes, I am afraid, however, that your share would be small."

"I fear so. I would be able to carry it without straining myself much."

"No doubt regarding that," with a smile.

"I was glad they did not ask to be allowed to enter and search the house," said Alice.

"Were you?" smiled Dick.

"Yes," with a blush.

"They had no suspicion that the person they were looking for was in the house, or they would have done so," said Mr. Rogers.

"You are right," agreed Dick.

The afternoon was ended, and evening was at hand.

Mrs. Rogers and Alice went to the kitchen and began getting supper.

They were to have a famous person for a guest, and they made up their minds to have a supper that was extra good.

Mrs. Rogers was a good cook, and Alice helped to the best of her ability, and the result was that when supper was announced, and Dick had got a look at the table, he realized that he was in for a treat indeed.

Fearing that the redcoats might approach and spy upon them, thus discovering the presence of Dick in the house, Alice took up her station near the window, from where she would be enabled to see the redcoats if they should approach the house, while the other three sat up to the table and ate supper.

Dick had protested that there was no danger to be apprehended from the redcoats, and insisted that Alice eat

with them, but she would not do it. She would have delighted to sit at the table with the brave young "Liberty Boy," but she was afraid it might result in his presence being discovered, and so she denied herself the pleasure and kept guard at the window.

It was as well, perhaps, that she did so, for just as three were finishing their repast, Alice saw the same redcoats approaching who had come to the house before.

"They are coming," she said excitedly. "You had better go upstairs and hide, Mr. Slater."

"Yes, go along," said Mr. Rogers, "and I will see what those fellows want this time."

Dick left the room and went upstairs, and Alice searched herself in the chair vacated by their guest.

Then there came a knock on the door, and Mr. Rogers hastened to open it.

"Good-evening," he said, before the redcoats could speak. "Have you seen anything of the rebel yet?"

"No," was the reply, in a tone of disgust. "I don't believe he is coming."

"Oh, it's early to begin looking for him, I think. What can I do for you?"

The two glanced toward the table.

"We came to ask if we could get a bite of supper with you."

"Certainly," was the prompt reply. "You are welcome to such as there is."

"Thank you; and then, if the rebel should come, we would be right here, ready to capture him."

"Fix places for our guests, wife," said Mr. Rogers, and the woman hastened to do so.

Alice had retired from the table, and the two redcoats took seats and ate up everything in sight, much to the girl's disgust, for she was hungry.

"I don't care for that, however," the girl said to herself; "if only they don't suspect the presence of Dick Slater and ask to be allowed to search the house I shall be more than satisfied."

CHAPTER VI.

THE REDCOAT WHO OWNED (?) THE STREET.

When the two redcoats had fully satisfied their hunger, they thanked Mr. Rogers, and then left the house.

It was now quite dark, and Dick came downstairs, and after bidding the three good-night, he left by way of the

near door, and slipping across the yard, climbed the fence and stole down the alley.

He soon reached the street, and turning up it, made his way up to Broadway.

He still had on the suit that belonged to Sam Rogers, and did not look much like the supposed country youth who had ridden the ungainly mule into the city that afternoon.

He did not believe anyone would recognize him as being the same youth, so he walked boldly along.

He was walking slow, when suddenly at a street crossing he found himself confronted by a big redcoat.

The redcoat was indeed a big fellow. He was almost a giant in size.

It was evident that he was about half under the influence of liquor.

"Hold on!" he said to Dick, his voice somewhat thick.

"What for?" asked the youth.

"Because I say so, that's why."

The youth looked up at the redcoat calmly.

"Oh, because you say so?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Richard Harper; more commonly called Dick, for short."

"Well, Dick, do you own this street?" asked the "Liberty Boy" in an offhand way.

This struck the other as being a pretty good remark, and he laughed loudly.

"Say, that's good," he remarked. "That fits the case exactly. Yes, I own this street—for the time being."

"Who sold it to you?"

"Oh, I just took possession of it."

"That's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, stand aside and let me pass."

The redcoat held out his hand.

"Toll, my friend, toll," he remarked.

"What do you mean?"

"That you must pay toll before you can be allowed to pass here."

"Pay toll to you?"

"Yes; the girls pay me in kisses, the men in silver."

"Has anyone paid you yet?"

"No; I've just taken up my stand here."

"Then take my advice, my friend, and dismiss this foolish notion from your head."

"Do you think it foolish?"

"Most assuredly."

"Why so?"

"Well, no man is going to pay you anything to be allowed to pass here."

"Then they won't pass!" This was said in quite a fierce voice.

Just at this moment a girl came along, and was about to pass by, when the redcoat seized hold of her, and pushed her back, at the same time saying: "You can't pass here, miss, without first paying toll."

"Paying toll?" in a tone of surprise. There was fear mingling with the surprise, too, and the girl's voice trembled.

"That's what I said, miss."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I own this street, miss, and am collecting toll from those who pass. The charges for a nice-looking girl like you is two kisses."

A little cry escaped the lips of the girl, and she started back.

"You must be crazy, sir!" she exclaimed.

"No, I'm not crazy."

"No, he is simply drunk, miss," said Dick quietly.

An exclamation of anger escaped the lips of the redcoat.

"I'll take the kisses from the girl, and then I'll settle with you, young fellow," he said threateningly, and he took a step forward, and reached out to seize hold of the girl, who stood rooted to the spot with amazement and fright.

The redcoat did not get hold of her, however. Dick Slater stepped in between them quickly, and pushed the man back.

"Hold on!" the youth remarked calmly, "do you know you are very ungallant?"

The redcoat stared at Dick in amazement. He seemed to be more surprised than angry, and he laughed sardonically, and said:

"Say, young fellow, I admire you for your nerve."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yes, I do."

"Thank you; but it doesn't take much nerve to confront a big coward like you."

An exclamation of anger escaped the redcoat's lips, and Dick felt a hand tugging at his arm, from behind, while a sweet voice whispered in his ear:

"Please come away, sir; the big brute will hurt you."

"There is no danger of his doing so, miss," replied Dick, gently freeing his arm from her grasp.

"See here," roared the redcoat. "Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Then I'll tell you."

"Go ahead," nonchalantly.

"I'm going to mop up the street with your carcass!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, 'indeed.' "

"When?"

"Right now."

"And here?"

"Yes, of course. Where else?"

"But we will both be arrested if we fight on the street."

"Fight?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" asked Dick.

The redcoat laughed louder than ever, and seemed unable to speak on account of it. Finally he got control of himself, however, and again Dick asked:

"Why are you laughing?"

"I am laughing at you."

"At me?"

"Yes."

"But why should you laugh at me?"

"Because you said 'fight'."

The youth knew well what the redcoat meant, but pretended not to understand.

"Why should that cause you to laugh?"

"Why?"

"Yes."

"Because there will be no fight."

"I am glad of that; then let us pass."

"Oh, I am not going to let you pass," the man hastened to say. "I am going to scrub up the sidewalk with you, as I said, but there will be no fight."

"Oh, I suppose you think I will simply permit you to do as you please with me, and make no resistance?" said Dick.

"Oh, no; but what could you, a mere boy, do against me, the strongest and best man in the British army?"

"That remains to be seen," was the cool reply.

The redcoat appeared to be surprised.

"Surely you are not crazy enough to think that you could do anything against me?" he asked.

"Well, you may be sure I am not going to fold my hands and permit you to 'scrub up the sidewalk' with me if I can help it."

"My boy, will you let me give you a bit of advice?" the man asked.

"You may give me all the advice you like; but I shall not promise to take it."

"You will do well to take it, too, my friend. The vice is this: to take your punishment like a man, and make any struggle about it."

"Thank you; I shall not take any such advice as that."

"You will wish you had, for if you struggle and attempt resistance I shall handle you all the more severely."

"I have no fear of you, or anything you may try to do."

The redcoat was evidently somewhat surprised by the coolness and calmness of the youth.

"If I thought your coolness was engendered by real bravery I would feel admiration for you, young fellow," he said; "but as I know it is engendered by ignorance, I feel only contempt for you."

"I don't care the snap of a finger what you feel for me," said Dick. "You are obstructing the sidewalk, and making a nuisance of yourself, and I ask that you stand aside and permit me and the other people behind me to pass."

Quite a crowd had gathered now, and was watching affairs and listening to the conversation with interest. The majority understood the situation, and felt sorry for Dick. They knew the redcoat was half drunk, and felt confident that he would half-kill the youth, once he got started.

The cool voice and fearless bearing of the youth had the effect of angering the redcoat. He imagined both were due to ignorance on the youth's part, and he made up his mind to teach him a lesson.

"You will order me to do this and that, will you?" the man cried. "Well, I'll give you a lesson that will last you a lifetime."

As he spoke he reached out to seize Dick, but he met with a surprise.

His hand was brushed aside, as if it were the hand of a baby, and then the owner was pushed backward with such force, Dick having placed his hand against the man's chest and given a shove, that he lost his balance, staggered backward, caught his heels against the curb, and fell headlong, on the flat of his back.

Instantly Dick turned to the girl, bowed politely, and said:

"You may pass onward, now, miss, if you wish. That big ruffian cannot interfere."

"Oh, sir, but will he not—will he not hurt you?" the girl murmured, tremblingly. "I fear he may injure you severely."

"There is no danger, miss."

But the crowd thought differently.

"You had better get away from here in a hurry, young man."

"Run while you have the chance."

"He will kill you when he gets up."

But Dick paid no attention to the remarks.

He was not at all alarmed.

The redcoat was a big fellow, true, and looked as if he might be able to handle two such youths as Dick, but the "Liberty Boy" was far from being an ordinary youth, and felt that he would be able to more than hold his own with the fellow.

The fallen man lay still for a few moments after falling. It was evident that he was somewhat dazed by the shock of the fall.

Presently he scrambled to a sitting posture, and then on up to his feet.

He glared at Dick with the look of a demon, and growled:

"So you are here yet, are you?"

"Yes, I'm here," was the calm reply.

"You would have done well to have gotten away while you had the chance."

"You think so?"

"Yes, for I'm going to just about kill you now."

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Well, go ahead with the affair as soon as you like," was the calm reply.

"You think that because you took me unawares and shoved me down, you can get the better of me, do you?" the redcoat asked.

The youth shook his head.

"No, I don't think so on that account," he replied. "I base my confidence in my abilities on the experiences of the past."

"Oh, on the experiences of the past, eh?" sneeringly.

"Yes."

"I suppose you have thrashed any number of men, have you?"

"You are right."

"But you never yet met such a man as I am, young fellow," in a fierce voice.

"Oh, yes; I've thrashed a dozen or more big bullies like you in my time," was the nonchalant reply.

A hoarse growl of rage went up from the redcoat.

"You are the most impudent young scoundrel I have ever laid eyes on," he cried.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, but I am going to take that all out of you very quickly."

"Go ahead and do it, then; don't stand and tell what

you are going to do. This is a case wherein actions will speak louder than words."

"You want me to act, do you?"

"If you are going to do so. Either do something or get out of the way and let the people pass."

"All right; I'll do something." And with the words the redcoat leaped toward Dick.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIRL SAVES DICK.

The girl uttered a scream.

Exclamations went up from the crowd.

Of course all expected to see the beardless youth crushed to the earth, and handled very severely.

They were destined to be greatly surprised, however.

The "Liberty Boy" was always right at home in a contest where fists were the weapons used, and where quickness, alertness, and skill were needed.

Then, too, when it came to a test of mere brute strength there were few men who had any advantage over him. It was possible that this big redcoat might be stronger than he, but Dick did not believe it. However, he did not intend that it should come to a test of brute strength if he could help it.

He had his eyes on his opponent, and when the redcoat leaped toward him out shot Dick's fist.

The man was not looking for this, and was unable to avoid the stroke. The fist struck him squarely between the eyes, and brought him to a sudden stop, and straightened him up. Indeed, he had to throw up his arms, in an effort to regain his balance, and keep from falling.

The youth took advantage of this, and out shot his fist again. This time it caught the redcoat right at the pit of the stomach, and doubled him up like a jack-knife.

Down the big fellow went, and a gasping groan of pain escaped him. The breath was practically all knocked out of his body, and he tumbled and rolled from side to side in an attempt to regain his breath.

"Oh, I am so glad!" breathed the girl in Dick's ear. "I am glad that you knocked the brute down."

Exclamations of wonder and amazement went up from the crowd.

They were indeed surprised.

There was not one among them all who had not expected

to see the boy roughly handled, but to their amazement it was the big redcoat who was getting the rough handling.

"That beats anything I ever saw."

"Who would have thought it!"

"The boy is a wonder!"

"He certainly is."

"I guess the big fellow thinks so."

Such were a few of the remarks made by the spectators.

Meanwhile the redcoat was struggling to get his breath, and finally he did succeed, and sat up with a jerk.

He sat there, his hands clasped on his stomach, and panted at a great rate.

Presently he looked up, and his eyes fell on the face of the youth who had floored him.

He looked the youth over from head to feet, and seemed to be pondering. He said nothing, however; possibly he could not spare the wind necessary.

The crowd watched him in silence, wondering what he would do when he got up.

They were to soon learn.

Presently the man rose slowly to his feet, and brushed the dust off his clothes. Then he turned and faced Dick.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Eighteen," was the reply.

"Eighteen, eh?"

"Yes."

"How much do you weigh?"

"One hundred and fifty pounds."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, why? Did you think I weighed more?"

"Yes; I judged you must weigh at least a ton."

This was said in such a dry, whimsical manner that the crowd laughed, and Dick could not help smiling.

"Oh, you thought I must weigh a ton, eh?" he remarked.

"Yes; I wouldn't have thought anyone weighing less could strike such a blow as that one you dealt me."

The youth laughed.

"Oh, that wasn't a very hard blow," he said.

"You think not?" with a grimace.

"That is what I think."

"Well, all I can say is that I consider it a hard blow. You don't mean to tell me you can hit a harder one, do you?"

"Oh, yes," promptly. "That was just a sort of feeler, and——"

"You are right about that, I know," the redcoat interrupted, "for I assure you that I felt it."

Again the crowd laughed, and Dick smiled. He realized that the redcoat was not such a bad fellow after all. A

man who can be knocked down, as he had been, and then get up and talk in a humorous fashion, could not help being a pretty good sort of chap, at least so Dick thought.

"If you have doubts regarding my ability to hit harder, I stand ready to convince you of the fact," said Dick, blandly.

"By hitting me again, I suppose you mean?"

"Of course. How could I convince you otherwise?"

"No way, I guess. But I don't care to be convinced."

"No?"

"No; I'm quite willing to take your word for it."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Then that means that you are not going to try to make pedestrians pay toll for passing along here?"

"You are right. I have come to the conclusion that it does not pay to own property in New York."

"Especially public streets, eh?"

"You are right. One can't make his title stand good."

"Very well. That ends the affair, then. And I must say you are more sensible than I thought you were."

"Thank you; but I know when I have enough."

"Some people don't know that much."

"I do. I was deceived in you, my boy. You are the best man I ever encountered in my life, and I will say this, that I don't bear any malice. You gave me only what I deserved. I would be glad to shake hands with one who can strike such a blow as you are capable of doing."

He held out his hand, and Dick grasped it.

The crowd was somewhat disappointed. It had expected to see some more fighting, and some one called out that the big redcoat was a coward for shaking hands with the youth who had knocked him down, instead of trying to even up matters by hitting him.

"See here," called out the redcoat angrily, "if the owner of that voice will step out and show himself, I will speedily prove to him that I am no coward."

But the speaker was careful not to accept the invitation.

"I'm not a fool," went on the redcoat. "This young fellow is a better fighter than I am, and I know it, so what would be the use of me continuing? The longer I kept at it, the worse pounded I would be. It isn't cowardice in stopping; it is common sense."

Then he entered a saloon near at hand, and as soon as the crowd had broken up Dick continued on down the street.

He had forgotten all about the girl in whose behalf he had interfered, but she had not forgotten him. Indeed, she had followed him, and now she touched him on the arm.

"I beg your pardon," she said in a sweet voice, as he looked around, "but I wished to thank you for what you did for me."

"Oh, that is all right," smiled Dick; "you owe me no thanks."

"I think differently, sir."

"No. The fellow had stopped me before you came along, and we had already had some words."

"I know, but he turned his attention to me, and would have seized me and tried to—to—kiss me if you had not interfered."

"Well, I can't say that I blame him much for wishing to kiss you," smiled Dick, a mischievous light in his eyes. The girl blushed prettily.

"You are just trying to flatter me now," she said.

"Oh, no; I mean it."

Before the girl could say more, Dick found himself seized by strong hands, and although he struggled he was helpless, for at least four men had hold of him. They were British soldiers, and as the girl saw they were getting the better of the handsome youth a cry of dismay escaped her lips.

"Oh, I wish I were a man," she said to herself, her little hands clenching. "I would help him thrash those men."

A crowd quickly gathered, and the girl was elbowed back out of the way, although she struggled to retain her place close to the youth who had interfered in her behalf when the big redcoat was about to seize her.

The "Liberty Boy" struggled fiercely, but was overpowered presently.

Then he looked at his captors with flashing eyes, and asked:

"Why have you done this? What do you mean by leaping upon me in this manner?"

"You are a rebel spy!" replied one of the soldiers.

"I am nothing of the sort."

"Of course you would deny it."

"And I do deny it. You are entirely mistaken, and I ask that you set me free."

"We could not think of doing so," was the reply. "We have had considerable trouble in making a prisoner of you, and now we do not intend to turn around and set you free. That would be foolishness."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Take you to headquarters."

"But I assure you that you are mistaken in thinking me a rebel spy."

"You are wasting your breath in talking thus," was the

reply. "We are sure you are not only a rebel spy, but that you are the great spy, Dick Slater!"

A muffled exclamation escaped the lips of the girl, who was listening eagerly.

"Can it be that he is indeed Dick Slater?" she asked herself; and then she hastened through the crowd, and reaching the outskirts, darted away at a run.

"I must save him," she murmured. "If he is Dick Slater, and they take him to headquarters, the result will be that he will be shot or hanged. Yes, I must see to it that he is rescued before they get him to headquarters!"

The girl soon paused in front of a house, ran up the steps, entered, the door closing behind her with a slam.

Meanwhile Dick was arguing with his captors, and trying to make them think they were mistaken, but it was no use. The redcoats merely laughed at him, and then, ordering the crowd to open up, they marched down the street, with the prisoner in their midst.

Quite a good many people followed, impelled by curiosity, as they wished to see what would be done with the youth.

It was quite a little ways to headquarters, and while the party was still more than a block from its destination, a party of four men suddenly darted from around a corner and attacked the youth's captors, knocking them down.

Then Dick was seized and hustled away down a side street.

The redcoats who had had Dick a prisoner had been struck with short clubs, which had enabled the wielders of said clubs to knock the soldiers senseless, and this enabled the party of rescuers to get away in comparative safety.

Indeed, some of the people followed, at a distance, but it was more out of curiosity than for any other reason. And so rapidly did the four men, with Dick in their midst, move, that they soon got clear out of sight of those who had started to follow.

As soon as they were sure of this, they turned down an alley, went through it to the next street, moved up this street two blocks, turned down an alley, and paused near the center of the row of buildings.

A glance up and down the alley showed them that the coast was clear, and passing through a gateway, they made their way to the rear door of one of the houses, and opening it, passed through into the building.

Then the door was shut and barred, and the men moved along a dimly-lighted hall, and entered a room which proved to be a library. This room was well lighted, and Dick got a chance to see what sort of looking men there were who had taken him away from the redcoats.

The youth was a bit puzzled to account for the affair. He did not know whether these men were friends or enemies.

He rather liked their looks, however, and when one stepped forward and cut his bonds he was about ready to believe that he had fallen among friends.

The men were of middle age, and were good-looking, and had the appearance and bearing of honest, honorable men.

"Well, Mr. Slater," said one, who seemed to be the leader, "I suppose you are a bit surprised by the turn which affairs have so suddenly taken?"

The youth started at hearing his name spoken, and looked at the speaker searchingly.

"Well, yes, sir, to tell the truth I am a bit surprised," he replied. "But why do you address me as 'Mr. Slater'?"

"Because that is your name—is it not?"

The youth hesitated, and looked at the men searchingly, and while he was hesitating he heard light footsteps, and turned to see the beautiful maiden he had befriended on the street a short time before.

The girl met his surprised gaze with a smile and a nod.

"You are surprised to see me, are you not, Mr. Slater?" she remarked in her sweet, silvery voice.

"Indeed I am, miss," replied Dick. And he looked at her in an inquiring manner.

"I was with you when you were set upon by the redcoats, you remember," the girl said. "I heard them call you Dick Slater, the famous patriot spy, and I made up my mind that you should not be taken to British headquarters. I hastened here, and my father, there, and three of his friends hastened to intercept the redcoats and rescue you."

"So that is the way of it?" smiled Dick. "Well, miss, I owe you a great deal—my life, perhaps, for there is little doubt that the redcoats would have shot or hanged me if they had succeeded in getting me safely to headquarters. General Howe knows me, and I would have been recognized the instant I was taken before him."

"Then you really are Dick Slater?"

"Yes, miss."

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK'S FRIENDS.

The leader of the four stepped forward and shook Dick's hand.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Slater," he

said. "I suppose you have a curiosity to know who we are?"

"So I have, sir."

"Very good; my name is Howard Sumner, and these gentlemen are friends of mine whose names are Willis, Hawthorn, and Murray respectively."

The youth shook hands with the three as they were indicated, calling them by name.

"And this is my daughter Lucy," the man continued, indicating the girl.

The girl gave Dick her hand, and acknowledged the introduction pleasantly.

"We are already good friends," she said. "I have already told father what I owe to you."

"You really owe me nothing, Miss Lucy," said Dick. "The redcoat had already had words with me, and I was going to have trouble with him, anyway."

"But I came up, and he transferred his attention to me, and you interfered with him."

"And was only too glad of the chance to do so, Miss Lucy."

All now became seated, and a general conversation ensued.

Mr. Sumner told Dick that he and the other three men, with six more who were not there, constituted a little band of "Independents," as they called themselves, and they were banded together for the purpose of doing all that they could to aid the great Cause of Independence.

While they were talking there came a loud knocking upon the door.

"I wonder what that means?" remarked Mr. Sumner.

"Likely there are redcoats out there," said Dick.

"Then the best thing that can be done is for you four men to hide."

"Yes, they might take a notion to search the house," said one of the men.

The man of the house turned to his daughter.

"You go with the men, Lucy," he said, "and conduct them to the secret chamber, and fasten them in."

"Very well, father," rising.

"Then go to your room, and be engaged in reading."

"Yes, father."

"Very well; hurry, and I will go to the door and see who is there and what is wanted."

The girl left the room, Dick and the three men following, and they were soon on the second floor.

At the farther end of the hall the girl paused, and pressed against a secret spring in the wall, and a section

of the wall slid back, revealing an aperture two feet wide by four in height.

"Quick; get through," the girl whispered. "There is a room of goodly size there, and you will be perfectly safe."

The three men and Dick passed through, and the panel was slid back into place, leaving them in Stygian darkness.

Then the girl went to her room, lighted a candle, took up a book, and seating herself, pretended to be reading. In reality she was listening intently, trying to hear what the strangers at the door were talking about.

When Mr. Sumner opened the door he found half a dozen redcoats standing there.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," he said, suavely. "To what do I owe the honor of this call?"

"We want to search your house," was the prompt reply, from one who seemed to be the leader.

"You wish to search my house?" in an amazed tone.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"You know well enough."

Mr. Sumner shook his head.

"I assure you that I do not," he replied.

"You do know. There is a rebel concealed in your house."

"What's that you say? A rebel concealed in my house?"

"Yes."

"My dear sir, you are greatly mistaken. There is no rebel in my house."

"Bah!"

"I am telling you the truth."

"I don't believe it."

"What makes you think there is a rebel here?"

"This: A party of the king's soldiers had captured a rebel by the name of Dick Slater, and were taking him to headquarters when they were set upon by a party of men, and the prisoner was taken away from them."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; they hurried away, and ran through several streets, but were seen to enter the alley which runs along the rear of this row of buildings."

"You don't tell me!"

"Yes; and they entered either this house or one or the other of the adjoining ones."

"Well, it wasn't this house, sir. I have heard no sound to indicate the presence of anyone in the rear of the houses, so think you must be mistaken."

"No I am not, and we must search your house; other parties are already searching the adjoining houses."

"Of course you may search my house if you wish," said

Mr. Sumner; "but I am a loyal king's man, and I assure you that I would not harbor a rebel."

"That may be, but you will understand that I can't take your word for it."

"Oh, of course I understand that."

Then Mr. Sumner stepped aside, and the redcoats entered.

Closing the door, the patriot said:

"Now, go ahead and search, friends; I wish you to do so, as I am a loyal king's man, and would not wish that you should go away from here laboring under the impression that I might be a rebel in sympathies and heart."

"All right, sir; we will have to search thoroughly, and if the rebel isn't here it will be all right for you."

"He isn't here, so I know you will be unable to find him."

"We will soon see whether he is or not."

The soldiers began working at once. They searched the cellar, then the rooms on the first floor, after which they went up to the second floor. They found no one, of course, until they came to the room occupied by Lucy, and then they paused upon the threshold, and stared in amazement and admiration. They had never seen a more beautiful maiden.

"My daughter, gentlemen," said Mr. Sumner, and the redcoats were gallant enough to doff their hats.

They searched the room, however, and as it was the last room on that floor they went up into the attic, and looked there.

Of course they found no one, and returned to the second floor, and then made their way back downstairs.

"Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" asked Mr. Sumner.

"Yes," was the reply. "There is no one here."

"Perhaps one of the other parties has found him in one of the other houses," said Mr. Sumner.

"It is possible. Well, we will go and see."

Mr. Sumner accompanied them to the front door, opened it, and held it back while they passed out, and then, bidding them good-night, he closed and fastened the door.

By the time he got back to the library Dick and the three men were there, the girl having let them out of the secret room.

"Well, that secret room is a great thing," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Mr. Sumner. "It is a very good thing, indeed."

Then they seated themselves, and began discussing the aspect of affairs in New York city.

The "Liberty Boy" told them that he was down in the city on a spying expedition.

"General Washington is naturally very anxious to learn the intentions of the British," Dick said.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Sumner. "It is natural that he should wish to have knowledge of the intentions of the enemy."

"It is almost an absolute necessity," said Dick.

"Have you learned anything as yet, Dick?"

"No, not yet."

"I suppose you do not intend going back until after you have secured real information?"

"No, sir. I shall remain till I find out something definite."

"Then stay here while in the city, Dick."

The youth hesitated.

"I am afraid I might get you into trouble, sir," he said.

"In what way could you get me into trouble?"

"Why, it is possible that the British will keep a watch on your house for awhile, and if they were to see me coming and going they would be suspicious that you were harboring a rebel."

"True," Mr. Sumner said. "Still, I am willing to take the chances, for the good of the cause."

"But I am not willing to take the chance of bringing trouble upon the head of your daughter, sir," said Dick. "No, I will go to a tavern."

"Well, do so if you prefer to, but remember, if you are in need of friends, or assistance, all you will have to do will be to come here."

"I will remember, sir."

The youth remained there an hour longer, and then bade them good-night, and took his departure.

He was sure that there would be redcoats on watch, so he was very careful, and stole away from the house with the stealth of a red Indian in his native wilds.

He managed to avoid being seen, and was soon on Broadway.

It was well along in the evening, but there were a great many people on the streets, promenading, so Dick was careful not to expose his person in the glare of the street lights any more than was absolutely necessary.

Presently he entered a tavern, and approaching the man behind the combined desk and bar, asked:

"Can I have a room here, sir?"

"If you have the money to pay for one, yes," was the reply.

"How much is it?"

The landlord stated the price, and Dick promptly produced the money.

"Want to go to your room now?" the man asked.

"I might as well," was the reply.

The man took up a candle, lighted it, and led the way through a doorway at the back of the combined office and bar-room.

Beyond was a stairway.

"Go up the stairs," the landlord said, "and go into the third room on your right."

"Very well, sir," said Dick, and taking the candle he moved in the direction indicated.

"I have to stay and look after my bar," the man explained.

"That's all right," replied Dick. "I can find my room, all right."

He soon found the room, entered, closed the door, and fastening it as well as he could, sat down on the edge of the bed and fell to thinking.

Meanwhile there was excitement in the bar-room.

One of the men who had been drinking in the room when Dick entered had started as his eyes fell upon the youth's face, and as soon as the youth had disappeared, and the landlord had re-entered the bar-room, this man rose and, approaching the landlord, said, with a jerk of his thumb in the direction of the doorway:

"D'ye know who thet feller is?"

"I haven't the least idea," was the reply.

"I do!" This was said with such an air of mysterious importance that the landlord's curiosity was aroused.

"Who is he, then?" he asked.

"Ever heer tell uv Dick Slater, ther rebel spy?"

The landlord started.

"Yes, I've heard of him," he said. "I understand that some British soldiers captured him this evening, but that he was rescued by friends before they could get him to headquarters."

"Thet's ther truth, too; I wuz theer, an' seen et all."

"Is that so?"

"Yas; an' this heer is ther feller, I'm shore."

There were four or five men in the bar-room, and they gathered around the speaker.

"Say, theer's er reward offered fur ther feller, hain't thet so?" asked one.

"Yas, five hunderd poun's."

"Thet's er heap uv munny."

"So it is," said the landlord. "And I'm in for trying to capture the fellow and get the reward."

"So are we all," said another, eagerly.

"Do you think we kin capture 'im?" asked another.

"I think so," said the landlord. "All we have to do is

wait till he gets sound asleep, and then we can slip into his room and make a prisoner of him before he is fully awake."

"That's the scheme!" nodded one.

So it was decided to make the attempt to capture Dick.

As they would have to wait two or three hours, to make sure that their intended victim would be asleep when they visited his room, the men seated themselves at the little tables, and began drinking to the success of their enterprise.

They kept it up till nearly midnight, and one or two of them were rather the worse for the liquor they had imbibed.

When the clock indicated a quarter to twelve, the landlord locked the front door, and, candle in hand, led the way through the doorway at the rear of the room, and up the stairs and along the hallway to the door of the room occupied by Dick.

The landlord tried the door.

It refused to open.

"He has fastened the door," the landlord whispered, "but we'll soon have it open."

CHAPTER IX.

IMPORTANT NEWS.

Dick Slater was a light sleeper, and he was aroused by the slight rattling sound made by the landlord when he tried the door.

The "Liberty Boy" rose on his elbow, and listened.

He heard the sound of whispering.

Instantly he became suspicious.

"That means mischief," he said to himself. "Somebody is trying to get in my room, and the question is, are they redcoats, wanting to capture me, or are they robbers, who wish to get in for purposes of plunder?"

Of course, there was no way of getting an answer to the questions. Dick knew, however, that the door was frail, and that the men outside would soon be enabled to get in, if they chose to do so, so he quickly and silently got out of bed, dressed, and stole to the door, just as some one gave it another push, which caused it to rattle.

"Well, what's wanted?" called out Dick in a loud, firm voice.

For a few moments there was absolute silence.

There is little doubt but that the landlord and his comrades were temporarily stricken dumb, for they had not suspected that the youth was awake.

The landlord was the first to recover the use of his faculties, and he called out:

"Open the door."

"What for?" asked Dick.

"I have something to say to you."

"Say it from where you are."

"I don't want to do that."

"Why not?"

"Because it is something of a secret, and you would not wish anyone else to hear what it is."

"Oh, I don't care who hears. Go ahead and tell me what it is."

"But you would care if you knew. Open the door."

"I couldn't think of doing so."

"You will be sorry if you don't."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"I don't."

"It is the truth. I have something to tell you which is of the utmost importance, and it is for your ear alone."

"You are the landlord, are you not?" asked Dick.

"Yes."

"Who is out there with you?"

"No one."

"Bah! You can't fool me. I know there is some one with you. I heard you whispering."

"You are mistaken. You must have been deceived by your imagination."

"Oh, no; my imagination never plays tricks of that kind on me. I have exceedingly keen hearing, and plainly heard the voices of more than one person."

"Oh, open the door, and let me in. I am trying to do you a favor."

"Then don't trouble yourself any more. I am getting along very well, and shall not blame you if I miss anything by refusing to let you in."

This angered the landlord, and he decided to throw off the mask.

"Open the door or we will burst it down," he cried.

"Oh, ho! I thought so," called out Dick. "So you acknowledge that there are more than one out there, do you?"

"Yes, I do; there are a sufficient number of us here, so that you will have no chance against us, and the best thing you can do is to open the door and surrender."

"I guess you don't know who you are talking to, landlord."

"Oh, yes, I do."

"Who, then?"

"To Dick Slater, the rebel spy."

Dick realized that he was in a tight place. He knew there were several men out in the hall, and felt that the odds would be against him if it came to a hand-to-hand encounter. And he was afraid it would soon come to this, for he realized that they could easily burst the door open.

"Oh, you are foolish if you think I am Dick Slater," he called out.

"You claim that you are not Dick Slater?"

"Certainly I do, for I am not the person in question."

"Then you shouldn't hesitate to open the door and surrender, for if you are not Dick Slater it will soon be proved, and you will be set free again."

"But I don't want to be bothered. I want to sleep."

"I can't help that. We are going to take you to headquarters, and if you are Dick Slater we will receive the reward, and if you are not you will be discharged."

"I won't go."

"You refuse to surrender peaceably?"

"Yes."

"Then we shall be under the necessity of breaking the door down."

"Wait; don't be in a hurry. If you break that door down, you will be sorry."

"Why so?"

"Because I am armed to the teeth, and will fight to the death, and the first four men who come through the doorway will die."

"The first four?"

"Yes; I have four pistols, and am a dead shot."

This seemed to put a damper on the spirits of the men, for no reply was made, and the youth could hear the fellows whispering.

The "Liberty Boy" took advantage of the opportunity to do some thinking. What should he do? Should he remain and fight it out with the men who were eager to capture him, or should he try to make his escape?

He felt that if it were possible to escape this would be the best thing he could do, and he at once turned toward the window.

Stepping softly to the window he tried it.

It gave, and he had no difficulty in pushing it up.

He leaned out, and looked down.

It was quite a ways to the ground, but the youth did not hesitate. He made up his mind that it would be better to risk getting hurt in the drop to the ground than to remain and risk capture, so he climbed through the window.

He made as little noise as possible, but he must have

made enough so that the men heard him, for suddenly there was a crash, and the door flew off its hinges.

The men rushed into the room, and were just in time to catch a glimpse of Dick's head disappearing below the window-sill.

They leaped toward the window, with yells of rage, and tried to grab hold of the youth's wrists.

They were too late, however, for Dick let go of the window-ledge, and dropped, the eager hands of the would-be captors clutching nothing but the wooden sill.

"Shoot him! Kill him!" cried the landlord, but before they could get their pistols out and stick their heads through the window the fugitive had disappeared.

"Quick! Let's go downstairs and out the front way," the landlord cried, and he rushed from the room, followed by all but one of the men. The one in question was a lithe, active fellow, and he climbed through the window, let himself down the length of his arms, and then dropped.

He was jarred by the fall, but was not injured, and ran out to the street. He was just in time to catch sight of Dick as he disappeared around a corner, and he darted after the youth.

He had gone but a short distance when the others came rushing out of the front door of the tavern, and the instant they saw their comrade who had dropped out of the window and thus beaten them, they thought he was the fugitive, and began yelling to him to stop. And one, more excitable than the rest, fired a shot from his pistol.

He was not a good shot at all, but this time he accidentally hit the mark. The bullet hit the Tory in the leg, and brought him down, with a cry of pain and rage.

When the five men rushed up they thought they had secured the "rebel spy," and great was their horror and disappointment when they saw that they had wounded one of their own party.

"You fool! What did you shoot me for?" groaned the wounded man.

"I—I—thought you were the—rebel," was the stammering reply.

"Well, you have given me a severe wound in the leg, and I want you fellows to help me get back to the tavern, where the wound can be attended to."

"But the rebel?" cried one of the men.

"He has escaped. You could never catch him. I might have overtaken him if I hadn't been stopped by the bullet. I saw him go around the corner, yonder, but he has got safely away now."

The men reluctantly gave up the idea of chasing Dick, and helped the wounded man to reach the tavern.

The landlord said there was a doctor in the tavern, and the man of medicine was routed out, and gave the wounded man his attention.

He said the wound, while painful, was not serious, and proceeded to dress it. When he had finished he went back to bed, and the wounded man was given a room in the tavern; the others took their departure.

Meanwhile Dick had made good his escape. He ran as rapidly as possible a distance of three or four blocks, and then, noting that he was not being followed, he slackened his speed to a walk, and walked onward.

He kept a sharp lookout behind him, however, for he thought pursuers might appear at any moment.

None did, however, and he presently entered a tavern, and asked if he could have a room.

It was in a more disreputable part of the city, where taverns and bar-rooms remained open practically all night, and Dick was told that he could have a room, but would have to pay in advance.

He did so, and then was shown to his room.

He fastened the door as securely as possible, saying to himself as he did so:

"This is a rough quarter of the city, and it is quite possible that some one might try to enter my room for purposes of robbery."

He was not disturbed, however, and passed the rest of the night in peace and quiet.

He ate breakfast in the tavern next morning, and then went out in search of more congenial quarters.

He soon found a tavern on a cross-street, and one that was more respectable; it was a place where he would feel safe.

He was on the streets most of the day, but kept a wary eye out, for he did not know at what moment some redcoats might pounce upon him.

He was not bothered, however, and he finally came to the conclusion that the redcoats had made up their minds that he had left the city.

"That would be the most likely thing a fellow would do, under the circumstances," thought Dick. "Not many would think of remaining and taking the chances, and I have no doubt the redcoats think I made all possible haste to get out of the city and back to Harlem Heights."

That evening he managed to slip into the home of Mr. Sumner, and was given a warm greeting by the patriot and his beautiful daughter.

Mr. Sumner had some news for Dick, but nothing of very great importance.

"You just lie low and take things easy, however, Mr.

Slater," the patriot said, "and I will find out what you wish to know, and tell you."

"Very well, I will do so, sir," said Dick. "I shall be much obliged and will not soon forget your kindness."

"Oh, that is all right. It is my duty to do all I can to aid the cause, and indeed I take a great pleasure in doing so."

Dick remained there a couple of hours, and presently the other members of the band of Independents came in, and he was introduced to such as he had not already met.

At last he bade them all good-night, and slipped out and made his way back to the tavern.

He remained in the city three days longer, and on the evening of the third day he again went to the Sumner home.

"I have news for you this time—important news, Dick," said Mr. Sumner as soon as the greetings were over.

"Yes; I have made a discovery, and it is important: The British are going to make an attack on the patriot army on Harlem Heights."

"Ah, I suspected as much," said Dick. "And when is the attack to be made?"

"To-morrow."

"Ah, so soon as that?"

"Yes."

"Then I must get back to Harlem Heights to-night, and let General Washington know an attack is to be made."

"Yes; you must leave the city to-night, and carry the news to the commander-in-chief."

As soon as he had heard all that his host was able to report, Dick rose to take his departure.

"I have no time to lose," he said. "I must be moving."

"Well, good-by, and good luck to you," said Mr. Sumner, shaking his hand.

"Good-by," said Dick, and then he took Lucy's hand, and told her good-by.

"Good-by, Dick—Mr. Slater," said the girl, her voice trembling slightly in spite of her—for she had taken a great liking to the brave "Liberty Boy"—"don't let this be the last time we shall see you."

"I will try not to let it be the last time, Miss Lucy," said Dick, and then he took his departure.

CHAPTER X.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS' " BOLD FRONT.

Dick returned to the tavern and paid his bill. Then he made his way in the direction of the Rogers home.

As will be remembered, Mr. Rogers was the man who had taken care of Dick's mule on the afternoon that the youth had first come to the city, and when he had been taken prisoner by the redcoats.

Dick had been to the Rogers' home the day before, and had been given a warm welcome. The redcoats had given up all expectation of finding Dick at Mr. Rogers' home, and had gone away and stopped looking for him.

When Dick reached the Rogers home on this evening, he was given a warm welcome. He told Mr. Rogers that he had secured important information that necessitated his return to Harlem Heights, and that he had come for his mule.

"All right, Dick, you can have him," said Mr. Rogers. "He has been well fed and taken care of, and, being fresh and strong, he ought to take you back to Harlem Heights in quick time."

Dick shook hands with Mrs. Rogers and Alice, and bade them good-by, and then went out to the stable with Mr. Rogers.

They quickly bridled and saddled the mule and then, leading Ebenezer out into the alley, Dick mounted.

"Good-by, Mr. Rogers," shaking the patriot's hand. "I am much obliged to you for taking care of Ebenezer and for your kindness to me."

"That is all right, Dick; you are more than welcome," said the man heartily. "Good-by and good luck to you."

Then Dick rode away.

Fearing that the white mule might be recognized, Dick did not venture onto Broadway, but kept to the side streets until he reached the Common. Skirting the common, Dick rode into the Old Bowery Lane, and heading toward the north, urged the mule to its best pace.

He met with no adventure, and two hours later arrived at Harlem Heights.

General Washington gave him a pleasant greeting.

"I am glad to see you, Dick," he said. "Do you bring me anything in the way of news?"

"Yes, indeed, your excellency," was the reply.

"What is the news, Dick?"

"The British are going to attack your army, sir."

"Say you so, Dick? When, pray, is the attack to be made?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow, eh?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Well, forewarned is forearmed, my boy, and now that we know the attack is to be made we can get ready to meet

it, and I am confident that we shall be able to repulse the enemy."

"I think so, sir."

After some further conversation with the great man, Dick saluted and took his departure.

General Washington at once called his officers together and told them the news.

"Let them come," said General Putnam. "We will give them a reception such as they are not looking for."

All the officers seemed to feel confident that the patriot army would be able to easily repulse the enemy, and they went eagerly to work to discuss details.

When Dick Slater returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys" the youth gathered around him and made eager inquiries.

"What's up, Dick?"

"Is there anything in the wind?"

"Is there to be a battle?"

"Are the redcoats going to attack us?"

"Did you find out anything down in the city, Dick?"

Such were a few of the questions hurled at Dick.

"One at a time, boys," the youth laughed. "Don't all speak at once. Keep quiet now, and I will tell you all about it."

"All right."

"We'll keep quiet."

"Tell us quick."

"Yes, yes, we can't wait."

"Shut up, fellows," roared Bob Estabrook. "Give Dick a chance to talk."

The youths became quiet, and then Dick went ahead and told them the news.

When they learned that there was to be a battle on the morrow they were delighted, for the "Liberty Boys" were never so happy as when the prospects for a fight seemed good.

"Let them come!"

"We'll be ready for them!"

"We'll lick them out of their boots!"

"That's what we'll do!"

Such were the exclamations of the youths, and Dick himself added:

"I think we will be able to beat them, boys," he said.

"We have almost an impregnable position here, and I am confident that they cannot possibly storm the position successfully."

The youths remained up for a couple of hours, discussing the affair eagerly and enthusiastically. Then Dick said:

"We had better turn in, boys, and get some sleep;

we will want to be up early in the morning, and will want to be wide-awake and clear-headed."

The youths went to bed and were soon asleep.

They were up bright and early next morning, as was indeed the entire patriot army.

On every hand could be seen men at work making preparations to receive the expected enemy.

Intrenchments were being dug, earthworks were being thrown up, cannon were being placed, and later on the different detachments of the army took up their respective positions.

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" were given a position half-way down the slope. This was the most advanced position, and was indeed the post of honor.

The "Liberty Boys" understood this, and were greatly pleased.

They were determined that General Washington should not be disappointed in them.

They made up their minds that they would make it extremely warm for the redcoats when they put in their appearance.

At last the redcoats were seen coming.

Nearer and nearer they came, and at last they reached the foot of the hill, the top of which constituted Harlem Heights.

The redcoats did not pause, but came charging up the slope as rapidly as possible.

Closer and closer they came, and soon were within thirty yards of the position occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

The "Liberty Boys" presented a bold front, however. They were not dismayed, and at the word from Dick Slater fired a deadly volley.

The battle was on.

Yelling and cheering, the redcoats continued to rush up the slope. They fired a volley from their muskets, but the "Liberty Boys" were protected by earthworks and did not sustain much injury.

The "Liberty Boys" fired volleys in return. The first volley they had fired was from their muskets, but each youth was possessed of four pistols, and they fired four volleys from these in a very short space of time.

Then the other patriot forces opened fire, and volley after volley was poured into the ranks of the redcoats.

The patriots could fire right down on the enemy, but the redcoats could not return the fire with any effectiveness, as the patriots were hidden by the brow of the hill, and the result was that the British suddenly became seized with a panic, and turning, fled back down the slope at the top of their speed.

The battle was over, for the time being.

The British retreated to a safe distance, and then paused.

The officers held a council of war and it was decided to make one more attempt.

General Washington believed that the redcoats would make another attempt, and so, in response to pleadings to be allowed to do so, he permitted three or four more companies of infantry to go halfway down the slope and join the "Liberty Boys."

The men had scarcely more than taken up their position when the redcoats again advanced to the attack.

They came rushing desperately up the slope, and for a few minutes the battle raged furiously.

Volley after volley was fired by both forces, and with dogged and desperate courage the redcoats advanced until it became a hand-to-hand affair.

The advantage of position was with the patriots, however, and presently they succeeded in hurling the enemy back.

Again a panic seized upon the redcoats and they fled for their lives.

This ended the battle for good and all.

The redcoats had become convinced of the impracticability of storming the heights.

They sent word under cover of a flag of truce, *in the wrong* wished to be allowed to carry away their dead, and General Washington granted the request.

The redcoats carried their dead and wounded away when they had buried the former and improvised litters for carrying the latter, they started on their return to the city.

They had left New York in the gayest of spirits, feeling confident that they would be able to thrash the despised "rebels," but they returned sadder and wiser than when they had started out.

Instead of thrashing the "rebels," they had themselves been thrashed.

The attack on the Harlem Heights had been a sorry affair for the British. They had lost three hundred men, while the American loss was only sixty.

"The 'Liberty Boys' were well satisfied with the part they had played in the engagement.

They had played a very prominent part, indeed, and it was largely due to their intrepidity, daring, and desperate fighting that the British were handled so roughly.

The British themselves realized this fact, and that night General Howe said to his officers:

"I would give one thousand pounds if Dick Slater could be captured and his company of 'Liberty Boys' broken up."

"They certainly did some desperate fighting to-day," said one of the officers.

"You're right," said another. "They are not afraid of anything."

The commander-in-chief of the patriot army, and all his officers, as well as the common soldiers, were very well satisfied with the result of the battle. They had given the British a severe handling, and there was little doubt but that this would be the last attempt they would make to storm the Heights.

And so it was.

For three weeks the patriot force remained on the Heights, and the British made no efforts to attack them.

But General Washington was a shrewd and cautious general. He believed the British were plotting mischief.

"It is not like General Howe to settle down there and do nothing," the great man told himself. "He must be planning some kind of a stroke, and I would like to know what the nature of it is to be."

"If anybody can learn the plans of the British Dick can," he said to himself, and he at once sent for the youth.

"You wished to see me, sir?" asked Dick, when he stood in the presence of the great man.

"Yes, Dick, I have some work for you."

"What is the work, sir?"

"I wish you to go down into the city, Dick, and try to learn the plans of the British."

"Yes, indeed. When shall I go?"

"At your earliest convenience."

"I will go just as soon as night comes."

That night, as soon as darkness had fallen, Dick mounted a horse and rode away in the direction of New York city.

He succeeded in getting into the city without clashing with any sentinels, and having placed his horse in a livery-stable, made his way toward the home of the Rogers family.

Mr. and Mrs. Rogers and Alice were at home, and were delighted to see him.

He told them why he had come, and asked Mr. Rogers if he had knowledge of the intentions of the British. The man had not, but stated that there was a rumor that another attack was to be made on the patriots.

The youth remained there half an hour, and then bade them good-by, and took his departure.

He went straight to the home of Mr. Sumner, and there, too, he met with a cordial welcome.

Mr. Sumner and Lucy both seemed very glad to see him, and when the youth stated why he was again in the city,

and asked Mr. Sumner if he had any knowledge of the intended plans of the British, he said that he had, and that he was glad Dick had come.

"I learned of General Howe's plans this afternoon," he said, and was wondering if I had better not slip away and carry the news to the commander-in-chief of the patriot army; but now it will not be necessary, as you can take the news to him."

"So I can," said Dick. "And what plan has General Howe now for attacking our army?"

"He has a very clever scheme on foot, Dick. He is going to send ships up the Hudson, and land men in the rear of your right flank, and he is going to send more ships up the East River and Sound, and land more men in the rear of your left flank, and then he is going to come in behind you, and cut off your retreat. Thus hemmed in, he thinks the patriot army will soon be forced to surrender."

"Ah, so that's his scheme, is it?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Well, it is a clever one, but now that we know what he intends trying to do we will be able to foil his plans."

"Yes, indeed, Dick. What do you think General Washington will do under these circumstances?"

"I think he will retreat northward, and thus prevent the British from getting in behind him."

"That would be the best move, likely."

Then Dick shook hands with his friends, and took his departure.

He went back to the livery-stable, mounted his horse, rode away, got out of the city safely, and two hours later was closeted with General Washington in his private room in the headquarters on Harlem Heights.

As a result of the news which Dick imparted to the commander-in-chief, the patriot army retreated back into the country, and took up its position at White Plains, and the British scheme to get in behind the patriot army and force it to surrender was a complete failure.

THE END.

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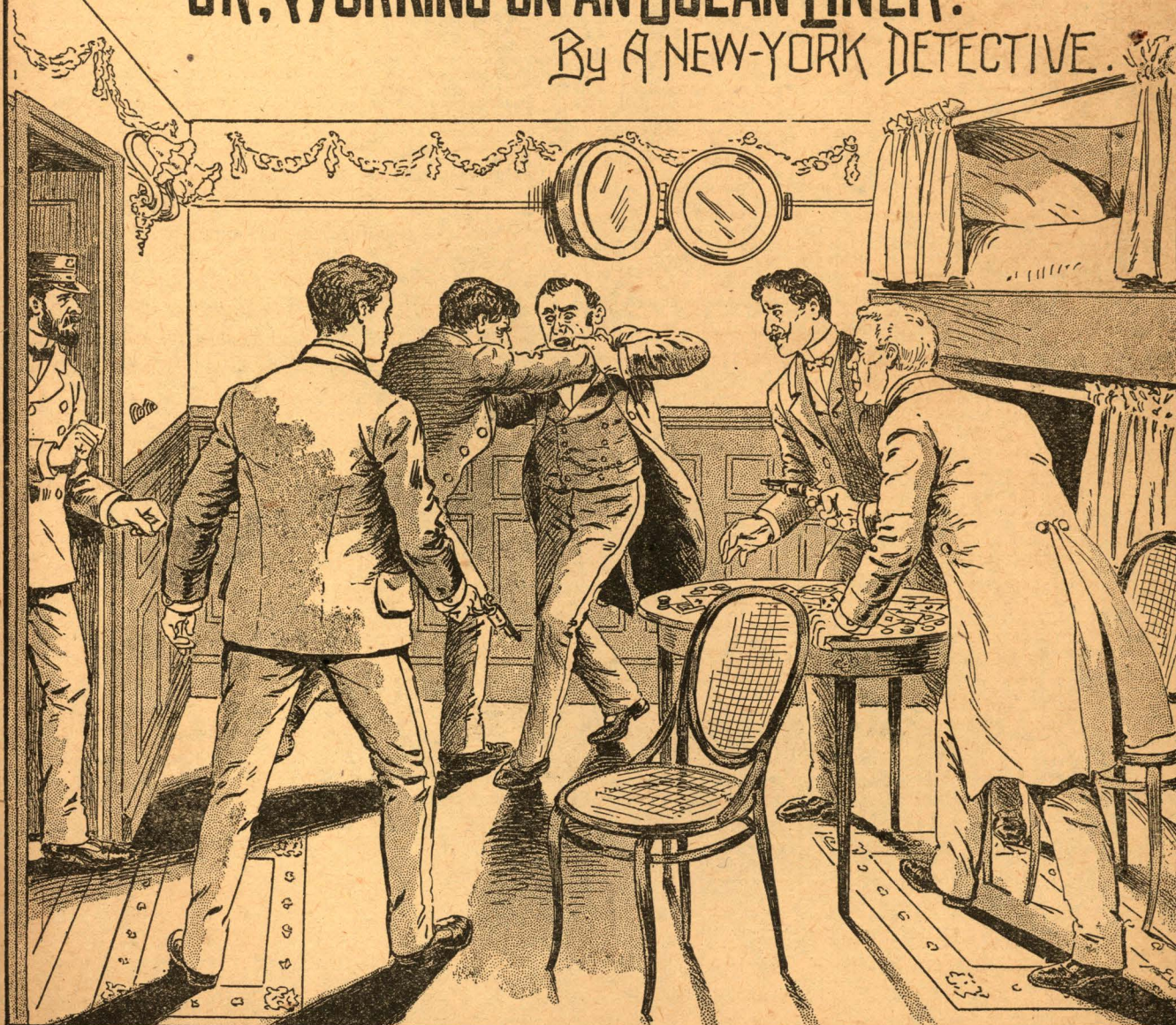
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